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ABSTRACT

This paper advances a model for the use of parents in the implementation of cooperative learning strategies in the home, so that parents can join with teachers in providing a quality education for their children. The main principles of the model include teaching parents how to: (1) encourage their children by providing adequate opportunities for cooperative involvement in the family; (2) change their own behavior as the only way to change their children's behavior; (3) improve parent-child communication; (4) use problem-solving and conflict resolution skills; (5) help their children with school assignments and homework; (6) build their child's self-esteem; and (7) help children make responsible choices. The paper includes a literature review of parenting models and cooperative learning, a comparison between traditional and cooperative paradigms of teaching and parenting, and a description of a parent education program based on the cooperative model. (Contains 45 references.) (MDM)

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ED 387 208

A COOPERATIVE LEARNING MODEL FOR PARENTS

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I would like to dedicate this special activity to the memory of my late mother, Rachela Edel, who left me a most valuable legacy - her unconditional love. This greatest of gifts has enabled me to appreciate the importance of parenthood, and is partly responsible for the development of the Cooperative Learning Model for Parents, the subject of this special activity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human development is a function of the interaction between individuals and the significant others in the society in which they live. People do not instinctively know how to interact effectively with others (Johnson & Johnson, 1990). The two major areas which influence individuals in their social development the most are the family and the school environment.

In the area of family, it has been widely accepted by social psychologists and by social anthropologists that parents play a major role in the formation of their childrens' personality. Levitt & Cohen (1976) suggested that parents' intimate interaction with their children in their roles as informal and/or formal instructors contributes in making parents the primary source of influence during their childrens' formative years.

The responsibilities of schools have increased in recent decades. Not only are schools in existence to educate children in the present, but they must also prepare them for a rapidly changing tomorrow. In addition, as family and social patterns change, schools are being asked to provide extended childcare, to promote both intellectual and social skills, and even to teach moral and religious education.

Across most of Canada and the United States, cooperative learning has been changing the face of the classroom and the very way children have been taught for

the past 20 years. Cooperative education was pioneered by researchers at the University of Minnesota in response to mounting evidence that the traditional mode of teaching, with students competing against each other for grades and the teacher's approval, was proving inadequate. (Semenek, 1995).

When cooperative learning is implemented effectively, research has shown positive results. These strategies have resulted in greater student achievement, higher self-esteem, increased retention, greater social support, more on-task behavior, greater collaborative skills, greater intrinsic motivation, increased perspective taking, better attitudes toward school and teachers, greater use of higher level reasoning, more positive psychological adjustment, and especially in the improved quality of the students' interpersonal relationships (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1990).

The influence of parents in their children's academic and social development is of paramount importance. However, the dynamics within the North American family have gone through major transitions in recent decades, affecting the number of significant others in the lives of most children. The incidence of divorce, the numbers of children being raised in single-parent, step-parent, and blended families, the increased number of employed mothers, the reduction of extended family and neighbourhood support systems have all had an effect on the transmission of important socialization skills from parents to their offspring. Also,

with the advent of television, computers, and Nintendo, children are spending more time interacting with inanimate objects and less time interacting with family and friends. There is a pervasive sense of inadequacy felt by many parents who would like to foster their children's success in school.

The needs of children to learn positive social skills, as well as the need to be successful in academic learning must be realized for positive self-esteem. In the traditional educational system, students, erroneously, felt totally responsible for their lack of success in school. Very often, the stifling effect of the traditional school system, with its individualistic and competitive orientation, combined with a difficult family situation, marginalized students from maximizing their potential.

An important recent trend in education has been to encourage closer links between schools and the communities they serve. Due to the rapid social changes since the beginning of the 20th century, especially the increased mobility of society, there has been a diminished capacity for young parents to call upon the expertise and experience of their own parents (Henry, 1981). Proponents of parent intervention programs have long acknowledged that parents must be partners in the educational enterprise of children. Hume (1995) noted that public education is crucial for the future of our society, in that it is education which determines who we are and what we will become.

This special project attempts to narrow the gap between home and school educational strategies. It addresses the need of parents to take an increasingly active role in the education of their children. The research on parent education programs is reviewed. Following this review is an examination of cooperative learning strategies in North American schools, including the research literature.

Interpersonal and group skills are vital to the success of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning models have been made available for teachers to systematically teach students interpersonal and small-group skills. The author of this project proposes a model for the use of parents in the implementation of cooperative learning strategies in the home, so that parents can truly join with teachers in order to provide for the greatest investment in the future of our society - quality education for children.

II. A LITERATURE REVIEW OF PARENTING MODELS

Major North American universities began conducting research on child development in the 19th century, after it was recognized by scientists, such as Darwin and Preyer, that the psychological study of the child could afford a scientific foundation to the rearing of children (Isaacs, 1929).

Baumrind (1972) identified three basic styles of child rearing. The "authoritarian" parents were described as being highly controlling of their children, less warm, and

more punitive than other parents. They tended to produce children who were withdrawn, discontented, and distrustful. The "permissive" parents were warm supportive, and nurturant, but tended to be overprotective and lax in discipline. They did not particularly encourage independence and made few demands on their children. These parents tended to produce children who were lacking in self-control and self-reliance. "Authoritative" parents, the most effective according to Baumrind, made frequent use of parental control and maturity demand but were also warm in their interaction with their children and used clear communications with them. These parents tended to produce the most self-reliant, competent, and mature children.

"Head Start" was an intervention project in the 1960's, which provided enrichment, socialization and cognitive stimulation to the child at school and at home. Zigler (1973) discussed the inclusion of a parent-training component in the "Head Start" project, which resulted in greater gains for their children. The **parent-focused approach** has also been supported by data analysis of intervention programs which utilize parent components (Goodson & Hess, 1978).

Research has attempted to relate specific parental behaviors and attitudes to the development of particular personality characteristics of children. Two basic dimensions - "control versus autonomy" and "love and hostility" - were identified as characterizing parental interaction with and attitudes toward their children

(McClelland et al., 1978).

Four types of early childhood parent programs can be found the literature (Cataldo, 1980). Philosophically, they arose from the behavioral sciences, health sciences, education, social work, and child-care. The first type focused on the "at risk" child or family. Secondly, programs emerged to provide social and informal support for parents. The third type provided for educational experiences for children and parents concurrently. The fourth type were of a psychotherapeutic nature, in which parents in relationship with child-care professionals explored child-rearing challenges.

The Parenting Model I present in this project proposes a cooperative learning approach to provide social and educational experiences aimed at improving child-rearing practices.

More recently, behavioral and multidisciplinarian approaches to parent training programs have been emphasized. In the **Behavior Modification approach,** parents are trained to modify their child's aggressive behavior through the use of positive and negative reinforcement (Henry, 1981). This approach has also been used to deal with a multitude of parenting problems, some of which include school phobia (Tahmisan & McReynolds), learning disabilities (Ramey & McKinney, 1981), toilet training (Madsen, 1965), and autistic children (Mathis, 1971).

Another group of parenting programs, based on the work of Alfred Adler, focuses on promoting a democratic home, in which the needs of the child are met in order that the child becomes an adequate human being who uses constructive means to obtain his or her own sense of significance (Fine, 1980). In these programs parents are taught to establish a cooperative, rather than a competitive family structure.

Henry (1981) reported that parents who participated in the **Systemic Training for Effective Parenting,** or STEP program were very pleased with the results of this program. This highly-structured program is based on Adlerian principles, and requires parents to involve themselves in group discussions, read the manual, and listen to tapes. However, Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976) reported that, although the STEP program was field tested in 14 study groups, no published empirical studies regarding its effectiveness can be found in the literature.

In the **interpersonal communications approach** to parenting, parents are taught communication skills, such as emphatic responding and reflective listening. Humanistic in nature, it is largely based on the work of Carl Rogers (Ginott, 1965 & Hetric, 1979). **The Parent Effectiveness Training program,** or P.E.T. is the most well-known of this kind of parenting approach. This program emphasizes the use of "I-messages" and the "no-lose" method of resolving conflicts through the participation of parents in lectures, readings, and role-playing exercises (Gordon, 1970).

Gordon & Sands (1976) attributed the effectiveness of P.E.T. programs to its wide usage. Boston University psychologist, Ronald Levant (1983) published a review of 23 research studies evaluating the effects of the P.E.T. program, but he found that most had serious methodological problems. The three studies that met the standards of methodological adequacy compared P.E.T. parents to a non-P.E.T. control group and used before- and after-the-course measurements. Out of 35 comparisons, 69 percent favored P.E.T. over the control group, none favored the control group, and 31 percent showed no difference (Levant, 1983).

Levant's specific findings were that the P.E.T. course produced positive improvements in parents' attitudes and behaviors, by becoming more confident, more accepting, and more understanding as parents (Levant, 1983).

The communication skills taught in P.E.T. programs would be included in my Cooperative Model of Parenting. Emphasis would be placed on learning to adopt a democratic parenting style, in which children are given choices and encouraged to think and make decisions for themselves. This style of parenting was proposed by Ginott (1965), who believed that "healthy child rearing practices would emerge from a self-aware parent who was able to accept the child, including the child's feelings and actions and who was able to offer the child the experience of a parent as a 'real' person" (Fine, 1980).

An excellent book on communication skills for parents, How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk (Faber & Mazlish, 1980) would also provide educational material to be included in the Cooperative Model of Parenting. Both parents and children can learn to adopt helpful dialogue, which stresses active listening, compassion, and compromise.

The multidisciplinary team approach to parent-education programs has been limited, and its sparsity of data in the research literature puts into question its effectiveness. The philosophy of this approach is based on the assumption that parents must be the central focus of any intervention programs, since they are the primary programmers of their infants; that early identification of intellectual, emotional, or physical handicaps and early intervention is best for the child; and, that the multidisciplinary model of a team of professionals is especially well-suited to infants and children, who exhibit atypical development. This multidisciplinary team could include a teacher, a psychologist, a physical therapist, a nurse, and an occupational therapist (Nielson et al., 1977).

In order to determine the relative effectiveness of different parenting models, Schultz et al., (1980) compared Behavior Modification, Parent Effectiveness Training Programs, and Adlerian study groups. 120 mothers from Australia who were a) from intact families, b) white Caucasians, c) aged between 23 and 50

years, and d) in the middle socioeconomic range were used as subjects in this comparative study. The subjects were divided into four experimental groups. The experimental and control subjects were matched according to socioeconomic status, age of mother, age of father, and number of children per family. Experimental subjects attended parent group education programs of 10 weeks' duration, meeting for one and a half hourly sessions per week. The research included two stages: a) a comparative analysis of short-term attitudinal outcomes, and b) a comparative analysis of attitudinal outcomes 12 months after treatment. The resulting parental positive attitudinal changes in all of these models supports previous studies which have cited a change in attitude as a significant outcome of parent education.

An evaluation of major education programs (Dembo et al., 1985) concluded that changes in parent attitude and child behavior can and do result but that the quality and type of research varied widely. Some problems with many of the research studies are methodological in nature. For example, it was found that only 40% of behavioral, 28% of P.E.T., and 30% of the Adlerian studies employed random assignment of families to experimental and control groups. Also, in some studies which used control groups, the control families were provided with interventions that did not deal with parent-child relations and the time given to these control groups was less than the time given to experimental families.

Since 1980, proper control groups have increasingly been used in studies, however, other problems are still evident in the research. One of these is that other formal and informal therapeutic interventions may be occurring at the same time as the group sessions (Fine, M., 1989). Another problem is the dropout rate in group parent education. Forehand et al. (1983) reported that in 45 parent training studies conducted from 1972 to 1982, the average dropout rate was 28%.

Kagan & Moss, (1962) reported that there were not enough well-designed studies from which one could conclude general effectiveness or the extent to which one program may be more effective with a given population. The evidence on parenting styles suggests that the global impact of various techniques is likely to be mediated by variables such as the child's sex, age, and socioeconomic status, and that general patterns of child-rearing appears to be determined by the nature of the total constellation of behavioral and attitudinal factors operating in the particular family environment in which they are used.

Despite differences in orientation and emphasis, the literature on parenting education programs confirm their common goal of assisting parents "who are attempting to change their method of interaction with their children for the purpose of encouraging positive behavior in their children" (Croake & Glover, 1977, p. 151).

Comparative studies based on specific models of parent group education fall into two broad categories: a) studies investigating parent group education as an interventive strategy (Tavormina, 1974), and b) studies directing attention to parent group education as a preventative measure (Hanley, 1974).

Although results of parent education programs have shown attitude change as a significant outcome of parent group education, further intensive and systematic research, taking into consideration the effects of ethnicity, educational level of parents, differences in socioeconomic level, and especially in the investigation of behavior change is warranted.

III. COOPERATIVE LEARNING

The three principal theoretical perspectives that have guided research on cooperative learning include: the social-interdependence perspective, the cognitive developmental perspective, and the behavioral learning theory perspective (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993).

The **social interdependence perspective** assumes that the way social interdependence is structured determines how individuals interact which, in turn, determines outcomes. It also assumes that cooperative efforts are based on intrinsic motivation generated by interpersonal factors in working together and joint aspirations to achieve a significant goal. Positive interdependence or

cooperation results in promotive interaction as individuals encourage and facilitate each other's efforts to learn. In negative interdependence or competition, there is oppositional interaction as individuals discourage and obstruct each other's efforts to achieve. In the absence of interdependence or individualistic efforts, there is no interaction as individuals work independently without any interchange with each other (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

The **cognitive developmental perspective** is largely based on the theories of Jean Piaget and Lev Semenovitch Vigotsky. This perspective is based on the premise that knowledge is social, constructed from cooperative efforts to learn, understand, and solve problems. During cooperative efforts participants will engage in discussions in which cognitive conflicts will occur and be resolved, and inadequate reasoning will be exposed and modified. (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec 1993).

The **behavioral learning theory perspective** focuses on the impact of group reinforcers and rewards on learning. It assumes that actions followed by extrinsic rewards are repeated. Slavin (1983) has emphasized the need for extrinsic group rewards to motivate efforts in cooperative learning groups.

Research on specific applications of cooperative learning to the classroom began in the early 1970's. One research group in Israel and three in the United States

began to develop and study cooperative learning methods in classroom settings (Slavin, 1991).

In Slavin's (1986) review of 35 studies, he found the effects of cooperative learning on achivement to be overwhelmingly positive:

Twenty-nine of these (83%) found that students in Student Team Learning classes gained significantly more in achievement than did students in traditionally taught classes studying the same objectives. None found differences favoring control groups. The methodological quality of the studies is very high; most used random assignment to experimental and control groups, standardized achievement measures, and other means of ensuring the objectivity and reliability of the findings. The studies took place in urban, rural, and suburban schools all over the U.S. and in three foreign countries, and involved a wide range of subjects and grade levels

In cooperative learning, students work in small groups to help one another master academic material. There are many quite different forms of cooperative leaming, and the effectiveness of cooperative learning (particularly for achievement outcomes) depends on the particular approach used.

Robert E. Slavin (1991) and the John Hopkins group approach cooperative learning using a specific curriculum in their formulation. This is in contrast to

Roger and David Johnson's curriculum - free cooperative learning approach. The Johnsons and Spencer Kagan share the idea that teachers should be given new methods so that they can teach whatever they want to teach more successfully (Brandt, R., 1990). Kagan's structural approach and Slavin's approach both emphasize specific behaviors among teachers rather than giving them general principles and leaving it up to them to decide how to structure the classroom. Kagan's studies were also unique in that he was able to show that heterogeneous groups (achievement and race) resulted in a strong improvement in race relations, sometimes extending into the long term (Brandt, R., 1990).

I have incorporated Roger and David Johnson's free cooperative learning approach for the Cooperative Parenting Model proposed in this special project.

Approximately 70 high-quality studies have evaluated various cooperative learning methods over periods of at least four weeks in regular elementary and secondary schools (Slavin, R., 1991). Outcome evaluations were sought for academic achievement, intergroup relations, mainstreaming, self-esteem, and others (liking school, development of peer norms in favor of doing well academically, feelings of individual control over the student's own fate in school, cooperativeness and altruism). The studies compared the effects of cooperative learning to those of traditionally taught control groups on measures of the same objectives pursued in all classes. Teachers and classes were either randomly assigned to cooperative or

control conditions or matched on pretest achievement level and other factors. Slavin (1991) presented the following summary of the effects of cooperative learning on achievement and noncognitive outcomes:

- For enhancing student achievement, the rnost successful approaches have incorporated two key elements: group goals and individual accountability. That is, groups are rewarded based on the individual learning of all group members.

-When group goals and individual accountability are used, achievement effects of cooperative learning are consistently positive; 37 d 44 experirnental/control comparisons of at least four weeks' duration have found significantly positive effects and none have favored traditional methods.

-Achievement effects of cooperative learning have been found to be about the same degree at all grade levels (2-12), in all major subjects, and in urban, rural, and suburban schools. Effects are equally positive for high, average, and low achievers.

- Positive effects of cooperative learning have been consistently found on such diverse outcomes as self-esteem, intergroup relations, acceptance of acadernically handicapped students, attitudes toward school, and ability to work cooperatively.

Johnson and Johnson (1989) have also reported significant gains in student achievement as a result of cooperative learning. Their 43 studies consisted of control groups in primary through college level classes in a variety of subject areas.

They also have conducted surveys and laboratory studies and found gains in academic achievement for all age levels in a variety of subject areas.

Although more research on cooperative learning has been done at the elementary level, Newmann and Thompson (1987) summarized research on the effects of cooperative learning at the secondary level. They identified 27 reports that met their methodological criteria for matching control and experimental (cooperative learning) methods. Of these, 25 (68%) favored the experimental method for overall academic achievement at the .05 level of significance. These less favorable results may be due to more rigorous research standards and to the fact that students at this age are less responsive to rewards and other forms of recognition. Moreover, their previous school experiences have taught them to value individual achievement and to be competitive.

All cooperative learning strategies share the premise that when students work together in small groups, they become responsible for one another's learning, as well as their own. Some kinds of learning groups facilitate student learning and increase the quality of life in the classroom. Other types of learning groups hinder student learning and create disharmony and dissatisfaction with classroom life. To use cooperative learning effectively, it is important to know what is and what is not a cooperative group.

There are many kinds of groups that can be used in the classroom. Cooperative learning groups are just one of them. When using instructional groups, the teacher must ask herself, "What type of group am I using ?" The following checklist may be helpful in answering that question.

1. **Pseudo-Learning Group:** Students are assigned to work together but they have no interest in doing so. They believe they will be evaluated by being ranked from the highest performer to the lowest performer. While on the surface students talk to each other, under the surface they are competing. They see each other as rivals who must be defeated, block or interfere with each other's learning, hide information from each other, attempt to mislead and confuse each other, and distrust each other. The result is that the sum of the whole is less than the potential of the individual members. Students would achieve more if they were working alone.

In a pseudo-learning group, one can generally find:

-one student doing all the work

-social loafing

-"killer statements"

-competition (hiding information, misleading)

-silent members

2. **Traditional Classroom Learning Group:** Students are assigned to work together and accept that they have to do so. Assignments are structured, however, so that very little joint work is required. Students believe that they will be evaluated and rewarded as individuals, not as members of the group. They interact primarily to clarify how assignments are to be done. They seek each other's information, but have no motivation to teach what they know to their groupmates. Helping and sharing is minimized. Some students merely rely on the others' efforts, while the more conscientious students feel exploited and do less than if they were working alone.

In the traditional classroom group, one can generally find:

-concern for individual score

-sharing but not listening

-not seeking consensus

-one group leader

-no processing of group dynamics

3. Cooperative Learning group: Students are assigned to work together and they are happy to do so. They believe that their success depends on the efforts of all group members. There are five defining characteristics of a cooperative learning group:

First, the group goal of maximizing all members' learning motivates members to

accomplish something beyond their individual achievements. They believe that "they sink or swim together."

Second, the group members hold themselves and each other accountable for doing high quality work to achieve their mutual goals.

Third, the group members promote each other's success through helping, sharing, assisting, explaining, and encouraging. They provide both academic and personal support based on a commitment to and caring about each other.

Fourth, group members are taught social skills and are expected to use them to coordinate their efforts and achieve their goals. Both taskwork and teamwork skills are emphasized. Each member takes turns accepting the responsibility for providing leadership.

Finally, group members analyze how effectively they are achieving their goals and how well members are working together. There is an emphasis on continuous improvement of the quality of learning and teamwork processes. The result is that the group is more than the sum of its parts and all students perform higher academically than they would if they worked alone (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993).

In a cooperative learning group, one can generally find:

-mutual group goal

-everyone involved

-shared leadership

-careful listening to others

-verbal support

-checking understanding of others

-processing task accomplishment and group dynamics celebration

There are five basic elements of cooperative learning, which when used together, become the strategies for solving problems associated with groupwork (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1990):

1. Positive Interdependence, when all members of a group feel connected to each other in the accomplishment of a common goal. All individuals must succeed for the group to succeed.

2. Individual Accountability, holding every member of the group responsible to demonstrate accomplishment of the learning.

3. Face-to-face Interaction, when group members are close in proximity to each other and dialogue with each other in ways that promote continued progress.

4. Social Skills, that enable groups to function effectively (e.g., taking turns, encouraging, listening, giving help, clarifying, checking understanding, probing). Such skills enhance communication, trust, leadership, decision-making, and conflict management.

5. Processing, when group members assess their collaborative efforts and target improvements.

Each of the above elements can be structured, whether the cooperative group operates in an elementary classroom or in the student's family group at home.

To **structure positive interdependence,** one could (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993):

-establish a **common goal.** One member achieves if all achieve.
-provide all members with the **same reward**. Every teammate must succeed.
-**share resources**. Provide one set of materials which must be shared by the group.
-assign each member with a complementary and **interconnected role.**

-divide the overall task into sub-units, which need to be performed in a set **sequence.**

-present the group with a **simulation** exercise, which they could use for success or survival.

-provide the group with an **outside force** with whom they must compete.

-bound the group by the physical **environment.**

-encourage the group to establish a mutual **identity** through a group name, flag, motto, song, etc.

In order to **build social interaction skills,** one could teach (Bennett, Rolheiser-Bennett, & Stevahn, 1991):

-taking turns (equally)

-negotiating

-sharing materials

-being responsible

-asking for help

-accepting differences

-asking for clarification

-being assertive in acceptable ways

-praising

-listening (actively)

-using quiet voices

-being a good sport

-everyone participating (equally)

-resolving conflicts

-moving quietly to groups

-reaching agreement/consensus

-expressing support/ no "put downs"

-acknowledging worth of others

-staying on task

-following through

-being gentle

-following directions

-saying kind things

-asking questions

-checking for understanding

-summarizing

-using names

-paraphrasing

-encouraging

-including everyone

-criticizing ideas, not people

-managing materials

-disagreeing in "non-hurtful" ways

-expressing nonverbal encouragement

-saying please/thank-you

-support

-occupying the same space cooperatively

-sitting in the group

-extending another's answer

-staying with the group

-asking for justification

-being self-controlled (keeping hands and feet to yourself)

-integrate ideas into single positions

-probing/asking in-depth questions

-looking at each other within the group

-controlling anger

-clarifying ideas

-ignoring distractions

IV. A COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND COOPERATIVE PARADIGMS OF TEACHING AND PARENTING

The old or traditional paradigm of teaching and parenting is based on John Locke's assumption that the untrained child's mind is like a blank sheet of paper waiting for the instructor and the parents to write on it. Because of this assumption, traditional teachers and parents teach and parent using the following principle activities (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993):

1. Knowledge, information, and customs are transferred from teacher to student, and from parent to child.

2. Children are passive recipients of knowledge and customs. Teachers and parents own the knowledge that students must learn.

3. Teachers classify and sort students by grading them and sorting them into categories under the assumption that ability is fixed and is unaffected by effort and education; parents categorize their children, eg. he's the smart one; she's the neat child - using the assumption that children's characteristics are unaffected by rank order, gender, and personal experiences.

4. Education is conducted within a context of impersonal relationships (similar to industrial organizations), in which students and teachers are perceived to be interchangeable and replaceable parts in the "education machine." The family is conducted within a context of hierarchical relationships, based on patriarchy. (Father tells mother what to do; mother tells eldest child what to do; youngest child is left with very limited autonomy).

5. A competitive/individualistic organizational structure is maintained in schools in which students work to outperform their classmates and teachers work to outperform their colleagues. A competitive/individualistic organizational structure is maintained within the family, in which sibling rivalry flourishes and parents often compete with themselves or with the "Jones'" next door.

6. Teachers assume that anyone with expertise in their field (having earned a degree) can teach without training to do so; parents assume that anyone who can conceive a child can also be an effective parent without any training to do so.

The old paradigms are often considered to be the only alternatives, with both teachers and parents persisting in the hollow pretense that all is well in the home

and in school. All is not well, and changes to a new paradigm of teaching, the Cooperative model, have been sweeping across North America.

In the Montreal area, cooperative learning is presently being used in a handful of elementary and high schools. The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal has provided training in cooperative learning techniques for nearly 70 percent of its 1,800 teachers. It is now recognized that the values promoted by cooperative learning are becoming increasingly important in the new global economy. In a recent Gazette article (Semenak, 1995), Charles Levy, director of instructional services at the PSBGM, was quoted as saying, "The values that are promoted in a cooperative learning setting are what we want to see in students of the 21st century - awareness and respect for the opinions of others and the ability to work together."

In the new paradigm, teachers and parents assume the following principles (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993):

1. Knowledge is constructed, discovered, transformed, and extended by students; parents create the conditions within which their children can construct meaning

and learn to develop trusting and caring relationships.

2. Students actively construct their own knowledge. Learning is conceived as something a learner does, not something that is done to a learner; children are actively involved in age-appropriate decision-making processes affecting the family.

3. Teacher effort is aimed at developing students' competencies and talents, and it is assumed that with effort and education, any student can improve; parent effort is aimed at cultivating optimum conditions, in which each of their children can grow into responsible, well-adjusted individuals.

4. Education is a personal transaction among students and between the teachers and students as they work together. Learning is a personal but social process that results when individuals cooperate to construct shared understandings and knowledge. Teachers must be able to build positive relationships with students and to create the conditions within which students build caring and committed relationships with each other. Challenge and social support must be balanced if students are to cope successfully with the stress inherent in learning situations; the

socialization process in families cannot occur except through interpersonal interaction that results when all family members cooperate.

5. Teachers structure learning situations so that students work together cooperatively to maximize each other's achievement. Classmates and teachers need to be viewed as collaborators rather than as obstacles to students' own academic and personal success, as often happens in competitive and individualistic learning situations; parents must be able to build positive relationships with each other and with their children, so that each family member's needs can be met, and parents and their children are collaborators, rather than competitors.

6. Teaching is assumed to be a complex application of theory and research and requires considerable teacher training and continuous refinement of skills and procedures; effective parenting is assumed to comprise a composite of many skills, which require training and practice.

The primary means of achieving the new paradigm of teaching is to use **cooperative learning strategies.** Carefully structured cooperative learning ensures that students are in an active sense cognitively, physically, emotionally, and

psychologically involved in constructing their own knowledge. This is an important step in changing the passive and impersonal character of many classrooms (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec 1993).

In this special project I have designed a model for **a new paradigm of parenting, which utilizes cooperative learning strategies and is based on cooperative learning principles.** It is my belief that this new paradigm of parenting is an important step in, not only greater success at school, but also more effective communication and emotional health of all family members.

V. A COOPERATIVE LEARNING MODEL FOR PARENTS

A common thread throughout the 1960's and 1970's has been a distressing tendency to blame the victim. When teachers and schools could not work miracles in an unjust society, the teachers and schools were at fault. Once attention shifted from the schools to the parents, the parents were to blame and needed changing. Only rarely did anyone suggest that forces beyond the control of either parents or schools were shaping the future of families and children: reductions in industrial productivity, antiquated employment practices, imbalances in in the distribution of income, just to name a few (Carnoy & Levin, 1976).

This futile cycle of blame must end. The goals of parents and teachers are inseparable. Both aim to provide the optimal conditions in which children can learn to grow into confident, educated, and productive citizens. Both are concerned with improving children's self-esteem, dealing with discipline problems effectively, improving motivation, and learning better communication skills (Herscovitch, 1993).

Nicholas Hobbs (1978) said that: "Parents have to be recognized as the special educators, the true experts on their children; and professional people - teachers, pediatricians, psychologists, and others - have to learn to be consultants to parents."

I have designed the **Cooperative Learning Model of Parenting** as a means of defining a comprehensive parent-involvement program to coincide with cooperative learning strategies which are increasingly being implemented in the North American public school setting. This model is based on the same philosophy as discussed in sections III and IV of this project. It holds that parents are capable, given the necessary training, of managing much of their own behavior and that they are willing and able to take responsibility for much of their child's growth and

development. The cooperative learning strategies for building positive relationships between teachers and students, and between students and their peers, can now be extended to include the building of positive relationships between parents and their children.

My goal in developing this Cooperative Learning Program for Parents is that, from my vast experience as a teacher (30 years), parent (21 years), and certified family life educator (6 years), I strongly believe that children brought up with warm, cooperative, and nonpunitive parental leadership, are less aggressive, have higher self-esteem, have healthier interpersonal relationships, and exhibit sufficient resources to deal constructively with problems (both in school and at home), conflicts, and disappointments they encounter.

In this model, as outlined previously in this paper, the main principles are that:

1. Parents create the conditions within which their children can construct meaning and learn to develop trusting and caring relationships.

2. Children are actively involved in age-appropriate decision-making processes affecting the family.

3. Parent effort is aimed at cultivating optimum conditions, in which each of

their children can grow into responsible, well-adjusted individuals.

4. The socialization process cannot occur except through interpersonal interaction that results when all family members cooperate.

5. Parents must be able to build positive relationships with each other and with their children.

6. All of the above can only take place within a cooperative setting, in which parents and their children are collaborators, rather than competitors.

7. Respect is equally accorded to all family members regardless of gender or age.

8. Parenting is assumed to be a complex application of theory and research that requires considerable training and continuous refinement of skills.

In order to effect this Cooperative Learning Model, parents must be given the opportunity to gain insights and skills needed to raise more responsible children and to foster more satisfying family relationships. Parent education programs must be offered in all schools which hope to improve the educational school system through the active participation and support of parents. Through this model, parents can reinforce at home, the cooperative learning skills their children need at school.

The implications of participation in this proposed Cooperative Learning Program for Parents extend far beyond children's success in school. The benefits include improved relationships between parents, teachers, and children. Also implied is a more democratic family structure, in which each family member is accorded equal respect and dignity, and, in which parents share power with their children. This is different from autocratic parenting in which the parent decides what the child will do, how, where, when and under what circumstances, leaving the child with no latitude to make responsible choices.

This new paradigm of parenting has a very strong values component. It may be criticized by parents who see parent training as a threat to the hierarchical family, as undermining the father's position of authority, as stressing the equal rights of women and children, and as posing a threat to nondemocratic families simply by showing a model of a democratic family and how effectively it can function.

Men particularly seem to resist giving up the power position in the family -- power over wives as well as over their children. Unfortunately, their emphasis on power-based control prevents them from having warm, supportive, loving relationships with all family members (Gordon, 1989).

Moreover, this model of parenting favors educated, middle and upper socioeconomic classes in North American society. A single parent family, with concerns for meeting basic needs, or a family struggling with addiction, or abuse would not have participation in a parenting program as one of their priorities. In addition, one cannot underestimate the religious, cultural, and economic factors affecting the desirability of participating in such a parenting program.

Although the limitations for such a parenting program are evident, its positive potential for many parents should not be overlooked. Research is needed on the effects of a Cooperative Learning Program for Parents - both for parent outcomes and for child outcomes. From the review of the literature on parent education programs and on cooperative learning, this proposed Cooperative Learning Parenting Model is an original.

VI. PROGRAM DESIGN

The following is a design of the program I have developed **for parents** who want to supplement their children's **cooperative learning skills** acquired at school with similar skills that can be used at home. Parents who wish to play a more effective role in the academic and social development of their children can, by means of this

new program, become an important ongoing source of support for their school-aged children.

Overall Program Goal:

To assist parents to change their method of interaction with their children to a cooperative model for the purpose of encouraging positive outcomes in their children in both the school setting and in the home.

Specific Program Objectives:

-To learn how to encourage their children by providing adequate opportunities for cooperative involvement within the family

-To learn that the only way to change a child's behavior is to change the parents' behavior

-To improve communication between parents and their children

-To create an awareness and understanding of the interaction of family members

-To learn problem-solving and conflict resolution skills

-To learn how to help their children with school assignments and homework

-To learn how to build their child's self-esteem

-To learn how to help children make responsible choices

Participant Mix:

Parents (couples), or parent of a child attending an elementary school, which uses cooperative learning strategies some or all of the time

Some Possible Topics:

-Parenting skills

-Cooperative learning strategies

-Communication skills

-Homework

-Discipline

-Building self-esteem

Some Possible Learning Approaches:

1. **COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES,** to enable parents to experience and foster a a cooperative learning home environment by building

a. **Positive Interdependence,** when all family members feel connected to each other in the accomplishment of a common goal. All members must succeed for the

family to succeed

b. Individual Accountability, holding every member of the family responsible to demonstrate accomplishment of the family objectives

c. Face-to-face Interaction, when family members are close in proximity to each other and dialogue with each other in ways that promote continued progress

d. Social Skills, that enable the family to function effectively (e g , taking turns, encouraging, listening, giving help, clarifying, checking understanding, probing) Such skills enhance communication, trust, leadership, decision-making, and conflict management

e. Processing, when family members assess their collaborative efforts and target improvements

To structure these elements at home, parents can follow the same procedures, as outlined in Section III of this paper

2 PARENT EFFECTIVENESS TRAINING (P.E.T.), developed by Dr Thomas Gordon in 1962, in order **to change parental attitudes toward discipline, power, and authority.**

Through P.E.T. parents can discard the language of power traditionally used in adult-child relationships, including words such as authority, obey, demand, permit, allow, set limits, deprivations, restrict, punish, prohibit etc. in order to take on a nonpower parental role that can be described by such terms as facilitator, consultant, friend, listener, problem-solver, participant, negotiator, helper, or resource person (Gordon, 1989).

Alternatives to discipline that parents (and teachers) can use to modify the behavior causing them a problem include the following:

- **Find out what the child needs**
- **Substitute** for the unacceptable behavior some other **behavior** that would be acceptable to you
- **Modify the child's environment**
- **Use I-messages,** a nonblameful method, which tells the youngster what the adult is experiencing in response to some unacceptable behavior of the child. I-messages

keep the responsibility with the adult (because it's the adult who "owns" the problem), and they are more likely to make children **want** to modify their behavior out of consideration for others.

- **Use problem-solving strategies,** which usually include these four steps:
  a. Defining the problem. (What are the parent's needs? What are the child's needs?)
  b. Generating possible solutions.
  c. Evaluating each solution suggested.
  d. Getting agreement (making a mutual decision) on some solution acceptable to both of you.

P. E. T. promotes **participative management,** whereby children are given the opportunity to participate in determining policies and in setting rules. Participative management involves a radical redistribution and sharing of power, and results in children feeling better about themselves, having higher self-esteem and self-confidence. Children feel more control over their own lives and that they are equal members of the family. Families that function cooperatively and democratically have closer and warmer relationships than those in which the adults act as bosses or authorities expecting the children to obey the rules made for them. In addition,

encouraging the full participation of children in decision-making often produces higher-quality solutions, both in the family and in the classroom (Gordon, 1989).

P.E.T. shows parents how to use the **No-Lose Method to resolve conflict.** This cooperative process facilitates the recognition of the legitimacy of each other's interests and of the necessity of searching for a solution that is responsive to the needs of all.

3. SYSTEMATIC TRAINING FOR EFFECTIVE PARENTING (STEP), based on Adlerian principles, shows how to implement "democratic" child-rearing practices, in which each family member is accorded equal respect and dignity, and in which parents share power with their children.

Through STEP, parents can learn how to live more harmoniously with their children by (Whittaker, 1993):

- **allowing a child to make choices**
- **understanding** that **a child** misbehaves to gain power, to pursue revenge, or to display inadequacy. A parent's reaction to the misbehavior - yelling or spanking is often the payoff the child seeks.

-**giving children encouragement** that recognizes their progress rather than the final achievement

-**giving blame-free, shame-free "I messages" about the child's behavior**

-**using "reflective listening,"** a technique that mirrors a child's feeling, permitting him to own and express his feelings

-**fostering responsibility in a child** by allowing him to live with the consequences of his behavior

-**holding family meetings** to air grievances, plan family activities or discuss issues

-**allowing siblings to resolve their differences themselves,** without parental interference

Some Learning Activities:

-role-play

-tapes

-discussion

-lecturette

Methodology:

Teachers, family life educators, and other qualified school personnel who are

familiar with cooperative learning strategies can lead the parenting programs. A typical program might run for six to eight 2-hour sessions, with participants meeting once a week. The program would be set up as a cooperative learning classroom, with groups of two to four parents facing each other. An experiential, rather than a lecture format would be followed. It would be very beneficial to have parents and students integrated for one or two sessions, however this may not always be possible, given the complicated logistics that such integration might entail.

To summarize, by using cooperative learning strategies, teachers, parents, and students experience a collaborative way of interacting, which emphasizes positive social and communication skills. These essential skills would eventually become the basis for learning, both in school and in the home. Parents who have completed the Cooperative Learning Program would place themselves in a much stronger position to help their children succeed in a cooperative learning environment at school, and would also help to raise healthier, confident, and responsible children.

Prerequisites for implementing the Cooperative Learning Model For Parents:

1. Develop a rationale - through Professional Development Resources, and parent-teacher meetings.

2. Explain the benefits to schools and to the families.

3. Assess resources in the community - make use of psychologists, social workers, and family life educators.

4. Plan the project - by collaboratively (i.e. parents and teachers) deciding the who, what, when, where, and, how activities aimed at reaching desired goals can be actualized.

VII. CONCLUSION

Cooperative learning requires a new and different role for all its players - teachers, students, and parents. It necessitates a more egalitarian distribution of power. The trend to change to a more cooperative society can also be seen in changing work patterns. The business community is spending a great deal of money training employees to improve interpersonal skills, so that increased productivity can result from people working more cooperatively.

Hume (1995) noted that "public education is our most profound cultural metaphor for 20th-century civilization. It affirms our hope for the future and confirms our

commitment to the idea of democracy ruled by thinking and informed citizens." The benefits of including parents in the educational process of their children can have far-reaching effects for themselves, for their families, and, ultimately, for the future of our society.

It is my hope that the more humane cooperative learning approach spreading through our school systems can provide impetus for a more humane cooperative approach in family systems. Teacher and parent education can provide long-term, positive outcomes for children. It is with this goal in mind that I have designed a Cooperative Learning Model for Parents as my special activity.

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